

FOCUS

BUSINESS LEHIGH VALLEY

Audio-visuals often take Orefield firm on the road

By **TERRY SCOTT REED**
Business Journal Correspondent

Jerry Deane is a self-confessed early-adopter and gadget geek, and therefore his company has kept on top of all the changes in AV over the years.

"It's my duty to be technologically visionary," said Deane, who is president of Technicom Audio & Visual Inc., which he started 30 years ago. "I estimate that I spend about 10 percent of my time just keeping current with trends and changes."

It is a constant challenge to decide what technology to invest in, he said, and at what point that investment should be made. "I can't recall ever missing a trend or an innovation, but I have occasionally bought in too early," Deane said.

He said that he saw great potential in video conferencing as early as 1990. The process is similar to conference voice calling, sometimes called "teleconferencing," but with video added. He said he didn't invest in it until 1999, but even that was too early.

"There was a spurt of video conferencing after 9/11, but it really didn't become mainstream until 2006. I went into that way too soon, but now it is one of our hottest areas for growth."

Deane said right now, video conferencing represents about 15 percent of the company's business. (He combines permanent installations and hourly rentals for that figure.)

Technicom represents three different teleconferencing equipment manufacturers, he said. A future wave, he predicted, will be teleconferencing coupled with telecommuting as personal video conferencing stations are developed. Deane formed a new division to better account for and track progress.

Deane is diligent about certification for his staff, obtained through the InfoComm International certification agency. He said that is wise because participants in the program will use each other's services at the other end of any video conferences they are providing instead of sending staff to each location. By using certified technicians, each company assures itself that the client company will get competent service.

Deane said he markets his services worldwide, in business print media advertising, and regional yellow pages. He also uses the Reese agency, Wyomissing, to promote his services and products.

About 70 percent of his business is derived from Eastern Pennsylvania, he said.

Over the years, Deane has worked in some exotic meeting locations, beginning with Las Vegas, but also in Europe and on several resort islands. While part of his business simply rents equipment, another part actually produces events for corporate clients, including several pharmaceutical companies.

It is usually less expensive to transport Technicom's equipment to the location than it is to rent it from the conference centers and by using Technicom's experienced staff, the client companies are more assured of a smooth presentation, Deane said. However, the company also works on a contractual basis with several of those very conference centers.

Deane lists the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce as regular clients. He provides sound and projection services for many of their luncheons and breakfast meetings. Besides the audio

portion, Technicom may project large images of the speaker, typically on screens erected on either side of the podium. The company may also project Power-

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point presentations or other graphics on the screens. He said he derives about an equal amount of business from Berks and Lehigh counties.

"Event budgets over \$100,000 are when things become really interesting," Deane said.

For example, he recalls a Las Vegas extravaganza he produced that involved acrobats hanging on flywires, and the company CEO entering on a wire "like Peter Pan" and descending to the stage. Deane said he worked with Cirque Du Soleil to create that production.

Another memorable meeting was in Cancun, Mexico. "We created a Mayan Temple set on the stage, and there were fire dancers in Mayan costumes. The temple parted in the middle and, through fog and smoke, the CEO emerged," he said.

Most of these productions are designed to inspire and motivate people in the audience, be they in-house staff or potential clients.

Deane said the most costly production he accomplished was about \$140,000. That was for an entire convention and meeting, including the stage presentation, he said.

Much of Technicom's work is more ordinary. Often, the company is called to consult on new construction or rehabs to incorporate the needed wiring for the latest technology. When T-Mobile established a call center in the building that was formerly DayTimers, Technicom installed the entire audio-visual network. Bear Creek Mountain Resort and Conference Center, Macungie, used the company to install its A-V equipment throughout the resort, and Technicom keeps a full-time contracted staffer on the premises. Deane's company also installed the video projection equipment at WFMZ-Channel 69's new studio. The company equipped eight to 10 training rooms for Buckeye Partners, and provided services for the TEK Park on Route 222, Breinigsville, which was formerly an Agere Systems location.

Recently, the company has begun providing streaming video for Web casts for Riverside Church, New York City. The company installed several unobtrusive remote-controlled cameras in the church, and each Sunday, a staff technician broadcasts the Sunday service on the church's Web site.

Deane would not disclose the company's annual sales, but, noting that services may



Photo by Terry Scott Reed
Jerry Deane, president of Technicom Audio & Visual Inc., Orefield, demonstrates the latest in teleconferencing equipment at his company's headquarters in Orefield. Older, larger equipment can be seen behind him.

sometimes overlap, said that revenue is derived from several sources, roughly divided into:

- Meeting and event production;
- A-V sales and service;
- Video conferencing;
- A-V rentals;
- Installations; and
- Digital signage.

After all the years, Deane hasn't become jaded. He still exhibits enthusiasm for the work. He's also been a user of the technology, having been a radio personality and night club owner.

Deane also supplemented his income by working as a DJ, something he still does on occasion. Deane, the self-confessed early adopter and gadget junkie said, "I was one of the first DJs to put away the vinyl records and go completely digital."

Deane said that the current economy hasn't helped or hurt his business.

"We're on pace, so far. But the manner in which the company earns is adjusting," he said.

He noted that several installation projects were postponed from 2008 to 2009, while more companies are inquiring about saving money through teleconferencing.

"We like to have work in our pipeline two to three months out, and that lead time seems to be shrinking somewhat now," he said, "but I don't plan any layoffs, and I have continued to invest in new equipment to keep abreast of technology."

Deane said he hasn't increased or

Business basics

TECHNICOM AUDIO & VISUAL INC.

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- **Fax:** 800-232-2984
- **Web site:** www.TechniComAV.com
- **E-mail:** Jerry@TechniComAV.com
- **Number of employees:** 13 full-time; 6 part-time
- **Locations:** 1
- **Years operating:** 30

decreased advertising, adding that it is difficult to reach the niche of potential users.

Also helping to offset any possible downturn is a new area — legal services — that looks promising, Deane said. The company has begun providing courts with video depositions, and has also set up big screen displays in courtrooms, where evidence is presented, and highlighted transcripts of prior testimony is displayed.

"The attorneys and the judges seem to like this very much," he said.

If you would like to have yourself or your business considered for the Profile tell us what makes you or your business unique, what you have done to create a niche in your particular industry or what you have done that has made a difference. Send information to John L. Moore, Editor, EPBJ, 65 E. Elizabeth Ave., Suite 700, Bethlehem, PA 18018. You also can send an e-mail to john.m@epbj.com.

Audio-visuals becomes lifelong pursuit

During his high school years, Jerry Deane was the student projectionist who wheeled the projection equipment in to the classroom, the days the teacher showed movies in class.

As president of Technicom Audio & Visual Inc., the Orefield businessman has focused on the audio-visual (AV) since the days of film projection and his high school involvement in the Audio-Visual Club, and he has followed it through its technical growth into the digital age with continuing fascination.

In those days, blackboards were actual-

ly black. There was no Internet; CDs had not been invented; classrooms didn't have drop-down projection screens, and "digital" referred to the fingers on one's hands. Watching a movie (on film) in class was a special day.

Deane started Technicom Audio & Visual in 1979, primarily as a rental company, renting sound equipment, slide projectors, screens, and overhead projectors. At first, it wasn't a living, and Deane worked part time at Kutztown College as events coordinator to make ends meet.